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# Northwest Indiana and Illinois Times

**Tuesday, September 09, 2008**

**State urges Hoosiers to be prepared**

Gov. Mitch Daniels has proclaimed this week to be Indiana Preparedness Week. To mark the occasion, state officials are urging residents to take four steps to be prepared in case of an emergency: make a plan, get a kit, be informed, and get involved.

“Every family needs to know what to do in an emergency, whether it is a terrorist attack, a natural disaster, or even a house fire,” said Joe Wainscott, executive director, Indiana Department of Homeland Security. “Sit down with your family today and make a plan. Be sure to include the needs of all family members, including pets.”

Wainscott says the recent storm damage in Indiana shows the urgent need for families and communities to make plans before a disaster hits. An emergency plan should include meeting as a family to discuss what to do before and after a disaster, identifying an out-of-state contact and a family meeting location, determining what to do with pets, and coming up with an escape route.

For more information, visit [www.statehealth.in.gov](http://www.statehealth.in.gov) or [www.IN.gov/dhs](http://www.IN.gov/dhs).

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**[September 4, 2008](#)**

**[PAOLI](#)** — Two members of the Orange County Sheriff's Department recently completed three days of training with the Indiana Intelligence Fusion Center. The training focused on new technologies that will allow law enforcement agencies to share information concerning criminal activities and persons of interest.

In the past, officers would have to call neighboring departments to see if similar criminal activities were occurring in more than one jurisdiction. Through the IIFC, departments can now enter suspicious activities or persons into a statewide database. This database can then be accessed by other departments to see if common issues exist.

The IIFC is a manned 24 hours a day by members of various law enforcement organizations including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, The Indiana State Police, Indiana Department of Homeland Security and others.

Joe Lynch and Bill Fullington completed the training held in Indianapolis. The training was provided by Dr. James Pastor, an associate professor of Public Safety at Calumet College of St. Joseph in Whiting.

Included in the training was information concerning foreign and domestic terrorist organizations. The Fusion Center also tracks the activities of groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nation, the New Black Panther Party, eco-terrorists and others.

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## ***State officials urge emergency preparedness***

September 05, 2008 09:13 pm

— Gov. Mitch Daniels has proclaimed Sunday through Sept. 13 as Indiana Preparedness Week. To mark the occasion, state officials are urging residents to take four steps to be prepared in case of an emergency: make a plan, get a kit, be informed and get involved.

“Every family needs to know what to do in an emergency, whether it is a terrorist attack, a natural disaster, or even a house fire,” said Joe Wainscott, executive director, Indiana Department of Homeland Security. “Sit down with your family today and make a plan. Be sure to include the needs of all family members, including pets.”

Wainscott says the recent storm damage in Indiana shows the urgent need for families and communities to make plans before a disaster hits. An emergency plan should include meeting as a family to discuss what to do before and after a disaster, identifying an out-of-state contact and a family meeting location, determining what to do with pets, and coming up with an escape route. According to State Health Commissioner Judy Monroe, a disaster kit should contain at least a three-day supply of the following essential items:

- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio;
- Bottled water (one gallon per person per day);
- Canned and packaged food (enough for each member of the family);
- Clothes;
- Essential prescription medications;
- First aid kit;
- Flashlight with extra batteries or a hand-crank flashlight;
- Hygiene items, such as toothbrush, soap, and toilet paper; and
- Manual can opener.

As of Friday, there have been 17,630 storm victims in Indiana who applied for federal assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Miller says the state is continuing in its efforts to help those who were affected by the late spring storms to recover, including Project Aftermath.

Project Aftermath, which is provided through the Division of Mental Health and Addiction at the Family and Social Services Administration, provides crisis counseling and emotional support to those who have experienced a loss or trauma as a result of a disaster.

For more information or assistance, visit [www.indianaprojectaftermath.org](http://www.indianaprojectaftermath.org) or [www.statehealth.in.gov](http://www.statehealth.in.gov) or [www.IN.gov/dhs](http://www.IN.gov/dhs), or call 1-866-679-4631.

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# Herald Journal

Tuesday, September 09, 2008

## Arson suspect jailed

**Kevin Howell**

Reporter

Delphi police arrest Larry E. Farner, 62, in connection with torched canal play boat at park.

DELPHI - Wabash & Erie Canal Association president Dan McCain is breathing a sigh of relief now that a suspect has been arrested in connection with the early Sunday morning burning of a canal play boat at the city's Canal Park. Arrested Wednesday through a joint investigation by Delphi City Police, Carroll County Sheriff's Office, Delphi Fire Department, Indiana State Fire Marshal and Indiana State Police was Larry E. Farner, 62, Delphi.

Farner was taken into custody by Indiana State Police in Lafayette around 11 a.m. according to Delphi Police Patrolman Paul Vondrasek who investigated the incident and followed leads to Farner.

"Through interviews and witness statements we narrowed it down to this suspect," Vondrasek said.

McCain's relief is due at least in part to a concern that after the recent fire the suspect might return and cause more damage.

"This is a great relief, I am dramatically relieved," said McCain who commented that he jumped up and down and shouted when he heard the news.

The approximately 70-foot-long by 12-foot-wide full size replica of an 1850s canal boat stood in front of the Canal Interpretive Center at Canal Park.

Work began on the boat last February by volunteers and was about six months in the building. The boat was built particularly for children to play on and included a tube slide and other features that gave the feel of a typical boat that plied the waterway 150 years ago.

Although a few finishing touches including a finish coat of paint on some parts were still to be done, the boat McCain describes as a "kid magnet" was put to use earlier in the summer, and also served as a setting for weekend plays about life on the Wabash & Erie Canal.

The boat was set on fire in the early hours Sunday morning and fire department personnel managed to extinguish the blaze by about 6 a.m., but not before it had destroyed the front half of the structure.

In 'the show must go on' fashion a play was given in front of the burned out boat Sunday afternoon.

McCain said Farner was involved in another incident involving Canal Park about six years ago during construction of the Interpretive Center.

"This is the same person who six years ago raced around and clipped off (support) posts when the Interpretive Center was being built," said McCain.

McCain said the man then raced down a trail and his vehicle became stuck between some trees.

"I went out and talked to him then, and he said we had ruined the canal."

According to McCain's account of that episode, as he contacted police about the Interpretive Center, the man found another vehicle and raced around the Carroll County Country Club several blocks away where he was finally apprehended by Sheriff's personnel.

"He went to jail but he came back to Delphi recently," said McCain.

"It's an unfortunate thing, but we'll rebuild. We want to get started cleaning up the debris, but we have to wait on the insurance (adjuster), and I'm not sure insurance will cover it," McCain said.

The approximately 1,800 hours of labor, although all by volunteers he estimates as a \$30,000 value in addition to

\$5,000 in lost lumber.

McCain said the community and the public in general have been responding with offers of assistance, and labor, materials or monetary donations are more than welcome.

"The public has been responding well and anyone wants to help, we also have a lot of other outside exhibits they can donate to," said McCain.

"I feel the community is responding because they like and appreciate what we're doing."

In the meantime Farner, charged with Class B felony arson, is being held at the Carroll County Jail on \$50,000 bond with additional charges pending on unrelated incidents.

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## **FWFD honors fallen firefighters**

Sep 6, 2008

FORT WAYNE, Ind. (WANE) - The Fort Wayne Fire Department (FWFD) hosted the Seventh Annual Fort Wayne/Allen County Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service Saturday, at the Law Enforcement/Fire Fighters Memorial of Allen County.

FWFD honored 16 Firefighters who died in the line of duty serving Fort Wayne and Allen County at the Wells Street memorial.

James Greeson, State Fire Marshal, Indiana Department of Homeland Security, Tom Hanify, President, Professional Fire Fighters Union of Indiana, Chief Pete Kelly, Fort Wayne Fire Department and family members of fallen firefighters all spoke at the memorial.

"Each time we do it, it just drives home that it is a dangerous job and we put our lives on the line everyday. Its the least we could do, is one day out out the year come together and recognize those fallen fire firefighters and of course offer our help up to the families," said Fire Chief Pete Kelly.

The ceremony included recognition of the 16 firefighters who died in the line of duty. Fifteen of the firefighters who died were serving the Fort Wayne Fire Department. One firefighter, Harry Stapleton, was serving the Wayne Township Volunteer Fire Department, now part of Southwest Fire District.

The firefighters are listed below along with the year in which they died. They are:

**Joseph Bahlinger, 1924; William Bandt, 1928; John Fleischman, 1916; Thomas Hazelett, 1936; Henry Hilbrecht, 1925; William Himmelein, 1936; Louis Hensel, 1910; Fredrick Hillsman, 1871; Edgar Miller, 1952; Michael Rager, 1972; Harry Stapleton, 1975; Raymond Steup, 1948; Laverne Strodel, 1947; Joseph Talarico, 1952; Roscoe Wehr, 1931; and, Charles Winkelmeyer, 1908.**

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September 7, 2008

## Fire threat lurks in thousands of Indiana homes

### Thinner gas lines linked to lightning fires

*By Robert Annis  
robert.annis@indystar.com*

Thousands of Central Indiana homes may be in danger of catastrophic fire if hit by lightning, yet the state has made no concerted effort to warn homeowners.

State officials have known for at least three years that cheaper, ultra-thin gas lines, which have become the preferred choice for contractors over the past dozen or so years, are more likely to be breached by lightning than the traditional thicker, black iron pipe.

The state has twice revised its building codes since 2005 to try to make new homes safer, but there is a debate over how effective those changes are in preventing the lightning fires. And, perhaps of more concern, those changes apply only to homes being constructed. There has been no attempt to deal with the thousands of homes most at risk: those built before the code changes.

How serious is the danger?

At least 35 homes have burst into flames in the past five years after newer lines made of corrugated stainless steel tubing, or CSST, were breached by lightning. And that's just based on fire department records in Boone, Hamilton and northern Marion counties.

Last month, in Jefferson, S.D., Martha Bertrand and three of her grandchildren were killed in a fire that investigators think was CSST-related.

Local fire officials fear it is just a matter of time before such a tragedy happens here.

Fishers Fire Chief Brian Lott is so concerned about CSST-related fires -- and the potential for harm not only to residents but to his firefighters -- that he plans to push state lawmakers in their upcoming session to ban the use of CSST.

The problem appears to be especially acute in the northern suburbs of Indianapolis, where new subdivisions -- and lightning strikes -- abound.

On a June night, more than 430 bolts of lightning zapped the ground within a five-mile radius of Zionsville resident Sarah Weider's home on Rocky Cay Court. One was a direct hit.

Lightning traveled down to the gas line and ruptured it, sparking a fire that caused more than

\$500,000 in damage to the 2-year-old house. Fortunately, Weider and her family got out safely.

Coby Maxwell also knows firsthand about the problem after a 2007 fire in his Zionsville home. Within seconds of the electricity melting a hole in the gas line, a fire started in the basement. Repairmen have since replaced the damaged CSST lines, but Maxwell admits he's uneasy.

"The same thing could happen again," he said. "We're always a little more nervous now when there are lightning strikes nearby. It seemed like a freak accident at the time, but we know now the gas lines played a role in the fire. It could easily have been a much larger explosion."

Ron Lipps, a spokesman for the Fishers Fire Department, estimates that half of the lightning-related fires fought by the department can be traced to damaged CSST.

Lightning rupturing the tubing, Lipps said, is akin to setting off a blowtorch in the middle of the living room.

"The walls of CSST simply aren't thick enough to withstand the energy of a lightning strike," said Oklahoma attorney Bill Cathcart, who has litigated several CSST-related cases. "But no one has taken any action to stop the sale or distribution of the products."

Why? In part because there is much debate over what precisely is causing the problem. CSST manufacturers and others, including Citizens Gas & Coke Utility, think CSST is perfectly safe -- if installed correctly.

CSST is 0.008 inch thick; black iron gas pipe is 0.12 inch thick -- or 15 times thicker. When lightning strikes the CSST, it is more easily pierced and can spark a fire. That means it is imperative that the material is bonded (an electrical connection is created between the pipe and a grounding electrode, such as copper wiring) and grounded (an electrical connection is made to the ground itself).

"The flex pipes need to be grounded to the manufacturer's specifications," said Garry Harling, a Westfield Fire Department division chief, "but a lot of the ones we see either aren't grounded at all or aren't grounded properly."

Many manufacturers, including Tru-Flex, Gastite and Ward, either would not return phone messages or speak on the record.

Chris Dattilio, a former sales manager for Omegaflex, pointed to Florida as a state with a high number of lightning strikes but few CSST-related fires. The reason, he said, is the state's bonding and grounding requirements.

"Throughout the industry, everyone's installation guides specifies CSST must be bonded to national electric code. But we found, after looking around, that some people don't do that," Dattilio said. "When they do install it correctly, we haven't found any problems at all."

Thus, much of the focus in Indiana and elsewhere -- from the Dallas suburb of Frisco to the state of New York -- has been to strengthen codes to require proper bonding and grounding of the gas lines to prevent arcing. In 2005, Indiana changed its code for new homes to require bonding and grounding procedures. Then, in April, Indiana officials revised the code to require at least a 2-inch gap between the CSST and any other kind of metal to prevent arcing, which can cause a fire.

But that change came after two years of discussion -- and in the face of opposition from



manufacturers.

"For state government, it takes awhile for things to get passed," said Rachel Meyers, a spokeswoman with the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, which includes the state fire marshal. "I don't know if it was an expedited process or if it just took that long to get all of our ducks in a row."

But others, including some insurance and fire investigators, are not convinced those code changes go far enough.

Darcy Smith, an investigator with State Farm Insurance for the Great Lakes region, said proper installation may reduce the chance of fire, but there are cases in which fires still broke out.

Beyond that, Gary Woodall, an investigator with Donan Engineering of Louisville, Ky., said many contractors, installers of heating and air conditioning systems and home inspectors aren't aware of the code change.

Nor are many homeowners aware that their houses could be in danger.

In March 2007, four CSST manufacturers settled a national class-action lawsuit in Clark County, Ark. Manufacturers agreed to pay \$29 million but denied wrongdoing, saying the flexible steel lines are safe if properly installed. People throughout the country were eligible to apply for vouchers of \$200 to \$2,000 to install lightning protection services. But there was no requirement to inform homeowners of the problem or the offer -- which expired one year ago.

So far, Meyers acknowledged, the state hasn't made any effort to contact and warn homeowners, either.

The state has just begun preliminary discussions on an information sheet for homeowners about CSST-related issues. Meyers said she hopes it will be available on the Indiana Department of Homeland Security's Web site within the next 60 days. The state would like to do an accompanying public-awareness campaign, she said, depending on the cost.

But that price tag pales in comparison with what it would cost to deal with what is quite possibly the most serious concern: homes built before the code revisions. Those include Brad Pressler's home in the Cobblestone Lakes neighborhood in Zionsville.

Pressler investigated problems with CSST after Weider's home caught fire. Soon afterward, Pressler did what it seems the state is counting on: He took matters into his own hands. He had his CSST replaced with black iron pipe. The fix cost him "thousands of dollars," but he's resting much easier.

Some of his neighbors also are considering switching. For \$100, homeowners can have an inspector check to see whether pipes are properly bonded and grounded, and whether a 2-inch gap has been created to prevent arcing.

Another option is installing a lightning protection system. Mark Benham, owner of Capitol Lightning Protection in Fishers, said installing such a system typically costs \$2,000 to \$4,000.

State Rep. Kathy Kreag Richardson, R-Noblesville, said it's highly unlikely the state would require all homes with CSST to be inspected or reimburse homeowners who upgrade the tubing's bonding and grounding, much less replace the CSST with black iron pipe. She suggested that an education program created by the state fire marshal would be the best and most cost-effective solution.

"Information is very important in this type of scenario," she said. "If we have an opportunity to save a family or home, it'd be worth doing. . . . I'm not saying we couldn't do something legislatively, I just don't know if it's practical to do so."

But without government intervention -- or homeowner revolt -- it's likely that CSST is here to stay.

Since 1989, more than 150 million feet of the less costly, more flexible gas line have been installed in the United States, according to Toolbase, a homebuilders resource.

That growing trend causes special concern for insurers and firefighters not only because they are concerned with CSST-related fires but also because those fires have a propensity for being especially devastating.

Typically, lightning fires start in the roof or upper areas of the home; but now, as the lightning charge travels down to the gas lines, the fires often start in the basement. As the gas-fed fire quickly eats away the floor joists, firefighters often are unable to fight the blaze from inside the home for fear of the floor caving in around them.

State Farm spokeswoman Missy Lundberg estimates her company's CSST-related claims exceed \$10 million. State Farm has filed more than 23 claims in Indiana since 2003, the bulk of them in Carmel and Fishers.

This is an added concern for homeowners -- and perhaps not just the ones with CSST.

"Claims experience," Lundberg said, referring to the mounting claims, "does affect rates. In the end, all of our customers could see the effect of this."

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## **Lafayette Fire Department expanding training center**

Two grants are helping the Lafayette Fire Department Training Center grow toward its goal of becoming a small city. Preparations are under way for three structures to be added at the facility on the city's southeast side.

One will be a four-story, 1,500-square-foot steel structure built from overseas shipping containers, said LFD Assistant Chief Richard Doyle, who is also the training coordinator. "You can use it to create any real life situation that you would encounter," he said.

The facility is the official training center for emergency services agencies in the Indiana Department of [Homeland Security](#) District 4, which includes Tippecanoe, Benton, Carroll, Cass, Clinton, Fountain, Montgomery, Warren and White counties.

The grants were awarded in January by the [state Department](#) of Homeland Security.

"Our ultimate goal, is to have a small city out here to duplicate even a small incident, like a car fire, or a large scale one that would include multiple casualties and involve multiple departments and agencies," he said. "That is what we want."

### **WHAT**

Three structures at the Lafayette Fire Department Training Center

### **WHERE**

2070 County Road South 500 East

### **WHEN**

By end of the year

### **COST**

About \$210,000 combined

### **SIZE**

One 1,500-square-foot structure and two 640-square-foot structures

-- Eric Weddle/[eweddle@journalandcourier.com](mailto:eweddle@journalandcourier.com)

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# Indiana says Hoosiers should have disaster plans

By RICK CALLAHAN

Associated Press Writer

3:38 PM CDT, September 5, 2008

## INDIANAPOLIS

Three months after devastating floods swept parts of the state, emergency officials urged Indiana residents Friday to take a lesson from that disaster and prepare now for the next natural or manmade calamity.

June flooding that damaged about 7,500 mainly south-central Indiana homes found many flood victims without a disaster plan for their families and lacking the 3-day supply of food, water and other basic necessities emergency officials recommend.

Not having a plan or basic survival supplies can undermine the work of emergency response and rescue crews, and may even put those workers' lives at risk, said Joseph Wainscott, director of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security.

When the public is prepared, he said, emergency response workers can focus on helping the people who most urgently need assistance.

"Individuals and communities who do not prepare may be needlessly putting our first responders in harm's way," Wainscott said during a Statehouse news conference with other state officials.

Friday's news conference was held in advance of the state's annual "preparedness week," which this year runs Sunday through Sept. 13.

State Health Commissioner Judy Monroe said residents should take steps now to prepare for their family's well-being after a tornado, earthquake, deadly flu outbreak or other disaster because emergency aid may take days to reach victims, depending on a disaster's severity.

"Emotions run high during an emergency, we all know that. So that's not the time to try to be

planning and figuring it out," Monroe said, adding that planning can save lives and property.

Wainscott said Indiana residents need to have a family action plan spelling out how their relatives would contact each other if they are separated in a disaster. Part of such a plan includes having an agreed-upon evacuation route and meeting places, he said.

Families also need a disaster kit with a minimum 3-day supply of water and food, a battery operated radio, weather radio, flashlights, batteries, a first aid kit and personal sanitation products, Wainscott said.

If needed, each kit should include prescription medication, pet food or infant formula.

Residents also need to be informed on how to respond in an earthquake, a tornado or other crises and should volunteer if possible to help with disaster recovery efforts.

"We should plan for the worst while hoping for the best," Wainscott said.

Andy Miller, the director of Indiana's Office of Disaster Recovery, said that the state and federal response continues following June's flooding, which hit south-central Indiana hardest.

He said 17,630 victims of the June flooding and other spring storms have so far applied for federal aid through the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

To date, about \$53 million in FEMA aid had been approved for individuals and another \$68 million in federal aid has gone to small businesses, Miller said.

Federal aid for local communities to repair bridges, roads and other flood-damaged infrastructure could eventually approach about \$150 million, he said.

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## **Disaster preparedness is best defense**

By Bryan Corbin

Saturday, September 6, 2008

INDIANAPOLIS — Massive flooding in June along the White and Wabash rivers should serve to remind Hoosiers they should be prepared to take care of themselves for at least three days in natural disasters and other emergencies until help arrives, state officials said Friday.

"In the event of a large-scale disaster, responders may not be able to get to everyone immediately. It may take hours or days before they might reach you," Indiana Homeland

Security Director Joe Wainscott said.

He urged families and individuals to set aside enough food, clothing and supplies to get by unassisted for at least 72 hours. Likewise, local governments ought to be self-sustaining for 72 hours without help from state and federal officials, he said.

"Individuals and communities who do not prepare may be needlessly putting our first responders in harm's way," Wainscott said during the launch of Indiana's annual "disaster preparedness" week.

The dire warnings of disaster planners came to fruition in June, when severe storms brought 11 inches of torrential rainfall to central Indiana that in turn swelled the White and Wabash rivers downstream in Southwestern Indiana.

Sandbagging efforts by local volunteers, first responders and the Indiana National Guard spared riverside communities such as Hazleton and Elnora from being inundated by record-shattering floodwaters.

With roughly half the state's counties later designated as federal disaster areas, a total of 17,630 storm victims applied for individual assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA distributed more than \$53 million in grants to victims, and the Small Business Administration provided \$68 million more in loans, said Andy Miller, director of the state Office of Disaster Recovery.

Ultimately, FEMA may reimburse local governments for upward of \$150 million for the cost of flood-related services and infrastructure damage, Miller said.

Last week, Indiana had been bracing to shelter as many as 1,500 Gulf Coast evacuees fleeing Hurricane Gustav, Wainscott said. The storm, though, was less severe than feared, and only a handful took shelter here.

"Watching the events of the hurricane unfold in New Orleans and the fear that there could be another Katrina, and the recent storms that we had in Indiana in June, have all driven home for us how important it is to have that emergency plan and be able to execute that plan when the event occurs," state Health Commissioner Dr. Judy Monroe said.

"Emotions run high during an emergency, we all know that; so that's not the time to try to be planning and figuring it out. We've got to have that plan before the event, so we can respond appropriately — and mitigate the loss of life and hopefully property as well," Monroe said.

To that end, the homeland security and health departments urge Hoosiers to plan ahead for a flood, earthquake, or other disasters. People should designate an out-of-state contact person and meeting place, devise an escape route and decide what to do with pets.

### Flooding damage

Meanwhile, it's not yet determined whether flood damage to the state's agriculture will be as severe as initially feared.

At the flood's height, approximately 10 percent of Indiana crop acreage was flooded; although farmers have been able to replant some of it, thanks to favorable growing conditions since then. Statewide, an estimated 4.5 percent of corn acreage and 0.9 percent of soybean acreage were "abandoned" or not replanted, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture yield estimate.

In Southwestern Indiana, 1.4 percent of corn acres and 6 percent of soybean acres were not replanted, the USDA reported.

"The difference means, folks got back in and replanted a lot of those acres. We won't know until harvest what the effect of that replanting was. It was pretty doggone late (in the season to replant)," Miller said.

Statewide, the cost to farmers of repairing damaged cropland — removing sediment and debris and correcting soil erosion — is estimated at \$200 million, he said.

Officials stressed disasters can be so traumatic that victims might need counseling afterward. Crisis counseling is available by logging on to [www.indianaprojectaftermath.org](http://www.indianaprojectaftermath.org) or by calling 1-866-679-4631.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

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